

THE ROLE OF RELATIVE PRONOUNS IN SUBORDINATE CLAUSES

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ANNOTATION: This article devoted to open the theme the role of relative pronouns in subordinate clauses. Moreover, in the article special characteristic features of relative pronouns were noted.

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Relative pronouns play a crucial role in forming subordinate (relative) clauses by linking dependent clauses to main clauses. They function as connectors and provide additional information about a noun, ensuring cohesion and clarity in sentence structure. Their semantic and syntactic roles vary depending on their antecedents, clause types, and contextual interpretation. In English, to make sense, any sentence must have at least one independent (main) clause, consisting of a subject and a predicate (a verb + an object/complement), which embodies the core of any English sentence. When a simple sentence as an independent (main) clause is connected to another clause, the type of the resulting sentence depends on the type of the added clause[1].

Relative pronouns serve as a bridge between the main clause and the subordinate clause by referring to a noun or pronoun (antecedent) in the main clause. For example:

- *The student who won the competition received a scholarship.*
 - "Who" refers to "the student" and introduces the relative clause "who won the competition."

Relative pronouns specify and clarify the identity of the noun they modify. Their reference can be:

- Definite (specific antecedent):
 - *The book that I borrowed is on the table.* (Refers to a specific book.)
- Indefinite (general reference):
 - *Anyone who works hard will succeed.* (Refers to any person in general.)

Relative pronouns can function as:

- Subjects:

- *The teacher who helped me was kind.* ("Who" is the subject of "helped.")
- Objects:
 - *The movie which we watched was exciting.* ("Which" is the object of "watched.")
- Possessives:
 - *The artist whose paintings were exhibited is famous.* ("Whose" indicates possession.)

Relative pronouns help distinguish between:

- Restrictive relative clauses (essential information):
 - *The book that I bought is interesting.* (Only the specific book I bought.)
- Non-restrictive relative clauses (additional, non-essential information):
 - *My brother, who lives in New York, is visiting next week.* (Extra detail about "my brother.")

Sometimes, relative pronouns create ambiguity. Consider:

- *She spoke to the manager who was on duty.*
 - Does "who was on duty" define a specific manager, or is it additional information? Context determines meaning.

Relative pronouns play a fundamental role in subordinate clauses, contributing to sentence cohesion, referential clarity, and syntactic organization. By linking dependent clauses to main clauses, they provide essential or additional information about a noun, ensuring that the sentence is both structurally and semantically meaningful[2]. Their function extends beyond simple connectivity; they define relationships between entities, specify referents, and contribute to the overall interpretability of discourse. One of the key aspects of relative pronouns is their ability to differentiate between restrictive and non-restrictive clauses, which significantly impacts meaning. Restrictive relative clauses, introduced by relative pronouns such as *who*, *which*, and *that*, provide essential identifying information about the antecedent. Without them, the intended meaning of the sentence may become unclear or incomplete. On the other hand, non-restrictive relative clauses, often set off by commas, introduce additional but non-essential details, making them more characteristic of formal and descriptive writing. Semantically, relative pronouns also serve an important referential function by distinguishing between definite and indefinite antecedents. They can specify a particular entity (*The book that I borrowed is interesting*) or make general statements (*Anyone who studies hard will succeed*). Furthermore, their syntactic roles—whether as subjects, objects, or possessive markers—add to the complexity and flexibility of sentence construction.

Despite their clarity in many contexts, relative pronouns can sometimes create semantic ambiguity, particularly when multiple interpretations of a sentence are possible. In such cases, context plays a vital role in disambiguation, and careful syntactic structuring is necessary to ensure accurate interpretation. Additionally, the use of relative pronouns varies across languages, with some languages relying on different mechanisms, such as participial phrases or relative particles, to convey similar meanings[3]. In summary, relative pronouns are indispensable in English grammar and syntax, facilitating the connection of ideas, enhancing sentence complexity, and ensuring precision in meaning. Their proper use is crucial for both written and spoken communication, influencing clarity, readability, and stylistic effectiveness. Understanding their semantic and syntactic properties enables learners, writers, and linguists to construct well-formed and contextually appropriate sentences, making them a fundamental aspect of language study and analysis.

Relative clauses are linked with the following relative pronouns:

who(m)	whose	where	<i>of, in, on, at, from, by, with, for ... + which</i>
which	when	why	<i>by, for, with ... + whom</i>

- *This morning, I met with the student **who** called me yesterday.*
- *The horse **that** is white costs thousands of dollars. Other horses are cheaper.*
- *A crystal is a piece of matter **whose** boundaries are naturally formed plane surfaces.*
- *He is a man **for whom** I have the greatest admiration.*
- *He was someone **whom** I had never seen before.*
- *The speed at which everything moved felt strange.*

English relative clauses modify nouns, like *adjectives*. However, unlike adjectives, they are postmodifiers (i.e., they follow a noun or noun phrase they modify), which means that they can never start a sentence:

- Love is friendship that has caught fire.
- Of all the animals, man is the only one that is cruel.
- Not all those who wander are lost. How blessed are some people, whose lives have no fears.

If the information provided by the relative clause is *essential* to the identification of the noun it modifies (the head), and if it cannot be omitted, no punctuation should be used. However, if a relative clause provides supplemental, parenthetical, or background (*nonessential*) information, and if it can be omitted without rendering the sentence unintelligible, it is enclosed by a pair of

commas (dashes or parentheses)[4]. Traditionally referred to as restrictive, or essential, relative clauses serve to identify, specify, classify, or define the head they modify. It is an integral element, causing no change in the pitch or intonation. A nonrestrictive, or nonessential, relative clause, however, is marked by a change in the intonation and pitch as a *supplemental* element that is *loosely* integrated into the syntax of the main sentence.

In summary, it should be noted that relative pronouns serve as essential connectors in subordinate clauses, linking additional descriptive or defining information to the main clause. By introducing relative clauses, pronouns such as *who*, *whom*, *whose*, *which*, and *that* contribute to sentence complexity, enhancing both clarity and coherence. Their role extends beyond mere grammatical function—they help refine meaning, reduce redundancy, and improve sentence flow. Mastering the use of relative pronouns is crucial for effective communication, as it allows writers and speakers to construct more precise, nuanced, and sophisticated expressions. A solid grasp of these linguistic tools not only strengthens writing structure but also improves overall comprehension in both spoken and written language.

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